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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: SAUDI OPPOSITION GROUP CALLS FOR FRIDAY PROTESTS  
KINGDOM-WIDE

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The London-based, Saudi opposition group accused of having links to al-Qaeda, the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia ('MIRA'), called for political gatherings to be held Kingdom-wide at 44 specified mosques beginning this Friday, August 11. MIRA, composed of religious conservatives who oppose the SAG's policies and support al-Qaeda, as per their website statements, attempted a similar protest three years ago. MIRA plans to avoid government interference by calling for the gatherings to begin prior to, not after, the Friday sermons. They called for the August 11 gatherings to be the first of many consecutive ones, but it is likely that even if Friday proves successful, the government will ensure the quashing of similar future protests. Nevertheless, this call is in line with recent criticism of the government in the wake of the Lebanon crisis. END SUMMARY.

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Opposition Movement Calls for Friday Mosque Political  
Gatherings  
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¶2. (U) On August 6, the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia called for gatherings at 44 designated mosques throughout the Kingdom to be held on August 11. Through their website, the London-based MIRA referred to their previous attempts to hold such protests and stated that by utilizing their new method of gathering prior to the Friday sermons instead of afterwards, as would be anticipated by the SAG, the gatherings could be successful. They stated that the three advantages of this pre-sermon method are: (1) no confrontation with, and detention or questioning by the security forces, (2) implementation is possible without collective organization, communications, or arrangements, and (3) no prevention by means of security measures, barrier, oppression or terrorism is possible.

¶3. (C) The statement urged all people to attend the specified mosques early on August 11, and commented that there is no obstacle for non-participation since all of the previous obstacles have been removed. MIRA called all people who "wish to put an end to the bad conditions in our country-- starting with unemployment, poverty and crime, up to tyranny, embezzlement of public funds, and chaotic judiciary-- to rise up with us in this activity so that this will be the beginning of a widespread field work to achieve a comprehensive change."

¶4. (C) The list of mosques included the Sulayman al-Rajihi mosque in Riyadh. This mosque is not particularly conservative in nature, but its immense size (it has three domes) and public location (it is situated at a circle along the main road to Dammam) make it an ideal location for a public protest. This mosque was also the main site of the MIRA's attempted protest three years ago.

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Background of the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia  
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¶5. (C) The head of MIRA, Dr. Saad al-Faqih, is a Saudi dissident and physician living in exile in London. He was one of the signatories of the 1992 "Memorandum of Advice" submitted to the late King Fahd, and he was jailed immediately following the memorandum's public release. He is a bin Laden supporter, who in past interviews has referred to bin Laden as part of a new social structure that opposes America as well as Arab and Muslim regimes allied with America. During his time in London, he formed MIRA, which called for Islamic reform in Saudi Arabia and the removal of the al-Saud family. He opened radio, television and internet sites to promote his cause. According to media reports, al-Fiqah has posted al-Qaeda messages on MIRA's website, and in 2001 assumed the role of al-Qaeda spokesperson in London following the arrest of Egyptian Islamic Jihad terrorist Yassir al-Sirri.

¶6. (C) MIRA was designated by both the United Kingdom and the United States as having alleged links to al-Qaeda. On December 24, 2004, under United Nations Order 2001, the Bank of England froze MIRA's assets because the Treasury had "reasonable grounds for suspecting that the organization is acting on behalf of Saad al-Faqih, who was listed by the U.N. as an associate of al-Qaeda on December 23." Similarly, on July 14, 2005, the U.S. Department of Treasury designated MIRA for providing support to al-Qaeda, based upon the designation of Saad al-Faqih, head of MIRA, pursuant to E.O. 13224 by the Treasury on December 21, 2004.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Due to the recent success of demonstrations in the Eastern Province and the increased criticism of the SAG in response to the Lebanon crisis, it is possible that MIRA's call for gatherings on Friday will enjoy mild success with the public. Although it is unlikely that the campaign will be successful overall, MIRA's renewed call for such protests after nearly three years and after having its assets frozen under U.N. and U.S. designations is a sign of increased strength and activism. END COMMENT.

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